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Mediating Effects of Gang membership and Negative Emotions on the link between Negative Life Events and Delinquency: An Integrated Approach of General Strain and Social Learning Theories

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MEDIATING EFFECTS OF GANG MEMBERSHIP AND NEGATIVE EMOTIONS ON THE
LINK BETWEEN NEGATIVE LIFE EVENTS AND DELINQUENCY: AN INTEGRATED
APPROACH OF GENERAL STRAIN AND SOCIAL LEARNING THEORIES

by

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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A large body of research on crime and delinquency has been conducted using Agnew's (1992) General Strain Theory (GST). Research has generally shown that youth who experience negative life events are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors (Baron, 2009; Vowell et al., 2000; Varano et al., 2011). Cho and Galehan (2019) found that Korean adolescents who experienced bullying victimization, child abuse, and poor conflicts in previous years were at a higher risk of committing later delinquent behaviors. Being victims of child abuse, neglect (Maschi et al., 2008; Cepeda et al., 2016; Yun et al., 2011) and bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Decamp et al., 2014; Higgins et al., 2012) are all positively associated with criminal and delinquent acts in children and adolescents. Also, youth are known to engage in more delinquent activity when their peers have rejected them. (Higgins et al., 2011; Hayes, 1997). Additionally, negative life events can trigger negative emotions causing adolescents to engage in drug use (Agnew 2015). The explanation of the mediating role of negative emotions on the link between negative life events and delinquency has received considerable empirical support in the literature (Cho et al., 2019; Jang et al., 2012) concluding that prior experiences of negative life events caused a greater likelihood of delinquent behavior later due to negative emotions.

Agnew (1992) suggests that strained individuals are at high risk of criminal and delinquent behaviors when their ability to cope with strain is influenced by individual, temperamental, and opportunity factors. It is assumed that individuals who experience stressful life events are more likely to engage in delinquent behavior in certain criminogenic and situational circumstances that create and facilitate opportunities. Several studies have provided empirical evidence that certain criminogenic and situational circumstances play a mediating role

in predicting the relationship between negative life events and delinquency (Kim et al. 2009, Kim et al., 2019, Park et al., 2020, Eitle et al., 2004). Cho and Lee (2020) found the mediating role of low self-control in GST predictions. Low self-control can lead to delinquency through the process of having weak behavioral restraint which leads to an individual's cognitive restraint also being low, making them impulsive which can lead to adolescents engaging in delinquent behavior. Additionally, other studies have found that delinquent peer association plays a mediating role in predicting the link between peer rejection and delinquency (Decamp et al., 2014; Walters, 2016).

Despite of a large body of delinquency research on the direct impacts of negative life events and mediating role of negative emotions as well as criminogenic and situational circumstances, many of these studies are not guided by the theoretically grounded framework. In other words, although GST has fared well under empirical scrutiny in many studies, a hybrid theory integrating major points of GST from some competing theories such as Social Learning Theory. remains understudied in the existing literature. The integrated approach proposes that strains can generate delinquency by creating criminal propensity through fostering motivations for (i.e., social learning) and reducing constraints against (i.e., social control) crime and delinquency.

Additionally, many studies have found that gang membership can amplify involvement in serious and violent delinquency (Varano et al., 2011; Melde et al., 2011; Melde, 2012). Gang members can learn new deviant activities and behaviors from other gang members. Differential reinforcement and the altering of definitions in favor of violating the law is the reason for these behavioral changes in gang members. The more an individual is in a gang and surrounded by other antisocial peers the more they will engage in deviant acts (Howell et al., 2005). Gang

members feel less guilt due to the amount of deviance they witness and participate in. They become desensitized to the violent crime they see other gang members committing. Increasing obligations of being a gang member begin to overpower the importance of school, the gang and the activities the gang participates in become more important than grades or prosocial activities. Despite considerable studies, several gaps remain in the gang literature. Very few studies have examined the mediating role of gang membership that causes the link between strains and delinquency (Vowell, 2000; Eitle, 2004).

To address these gaps in literature, the purpose of this study contributes to the gang delinquency research through a process of showing how/why delinquent behavior is more likely to be the response to strains in some situations than others. The study provides a theoretically grounded examination for a plausible hybrid model integrating GST and social learning theory (SLT) to investigate its utility in explaining the growing problem of gang delinquency. In other words, the current study examines both the direct and indirect influences of multiple sources of strain on adolescents' deviant behaviors through gang membership. By doing so, the study would extend research and help cultivate new juvenile crime prevention strategies and policies that would help reduce criminal opportunities, leading to a reduction in criminal and delinquent activity. Overall, the study seeks to advance the theoretical frameworks to address several empirical and theoretical limitations of the extant gang research by integrating GST and SLT.

CHAPTER 2

WHO ARE GANGS?

Definitions of what a gang member is have been debated in the research field (Esbensen et al., 2001,; Laverso et al., 2019; Winfree et al., 1992; Carson et al., 2013; Ball and Curry 1995). How a researcher operationalizes a definition can change the results in a particular study greatly. Definitions that embody what a gang member is are those that include multiple variables. Asking many questions not just the generic question of “Are you a gang member” will give the researcher much more valuable information needed to reach an accurate conclusion with few errors. A gang is defined by Esbensen in 2001 as a group of teenagers and or young adults who commit acts of delinquency and have regular meetings and some sort of power balance and organization (Esbensen et al., 2001), for example rankings and leadership in the group. Gangs could also associate themselves with particular colors and or symbols that make them recognizable to other gangs (Winfree et al., (1992). Other identifiers to strengthen a definition could be if the group has initiation rites rules or codes specific roles, like roles for girls or those that are younger ages (Laverso et al., 2019).

The definition of a gang member when conducting research needs to be clear and distinctive. Having a strict definition for a gang member determines different statistical significance by being too inclusive and exclusive. It is essential to be able to distinguish between a genuine gang member and a person who simply dresses the part. Studies have used different types of techniques to define who a gang member is and is not. For example, using a self-nomination strategy but asking questions that would further clarify the organization level of the gang therefore strengthening the gang members self-nomination (Carson et al., 2013). This studies significance levels illustrated in the results differed based upon which gang definition the

gang member aligned themselves with.

Gang definitions have a history of being either overinclusive, underinclusive or even both. If incorporated into law, this can render legislation unconstitutional through overgeneralization or incorrectness. In criminal law it can become difficult to prove what a gang member is and what it is not without a clear definition. In court room it can become a constant back and forth when accusing a person of being involved in gang activity. For example, the defense could argue that the individual is not involved in gang activity by who he hangs out with and the types of clothes he wears however the prosecution could argue this is not a sufficient definition to define someone as a gang member. In a study done by Miller in 1975 a definition for a gang was cultivated by asking a team of those who worked in law enforcement, law officials such as prosecutors and public offenders as well as ex-convicts what they believed a gang member to be. The result was them coming to an agreement on 6 factors and Miller formed the following definition. “a self-formed association of peers, bound together by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership, well-developed lines of authority, and other organizational features, who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose or purposes which generally include the conduct of illegal activity and control over a particular territory, facility, or type of enterprise” (Ball & Curry, 1995, p 228). This is definition is sufficient to describe a gang, a similar process needs to occur in order to truly define what a gang member is. However, future researchers should build off this term of what a gang is to cultivate the definition of a gang member in their studies.

New definitions of deviant behavior can change an adolescent’s mind about criminal activity especially when a child is vulnerable, for example undergoing neglect and not in a stable emotional state. Pratt et al., 2010) In this vulnerable state youth can see crime as a reasonable choice to cope with their negative emotions. Akers (2015) states that through differential

association peers can begin to pick up on new deviant definitions that are in support of delinquent behavior. What someone used to think was not permissible soon becomes permissible when it is presented in a different form. Additionally, Agnew (1992) states that individuals begin to have negative emotions, strain, that have been triggered from negative life events. These negative emotions can alter an individual's judgements and put them in a position to make choices they would not have made otherwise in order to cope with their situation. This paired with the presence a new delinquent peer making new suggestions on how the world operates for example and leading a delinquent down a path that is self-serving instead rather than thinking of societal rules and codes could turn them to committing crimes and associating with gang members.

Gangs have their own set of codes and rules that do not align with society's. They take in youth by coercing them into gang membership and use their particular circumstances like going through serious life events and teach them deviant ways of coping with these feelings they experience. Joining the gang may allow individuals to feel like they have more control over what happens in their lives. The false power and prestige of being in a gang provides them with a feeling that enables them to cope with the various hardships they have endured. An example of why someone would join a gang is due to victimization. Being bullied in school and away from school could make someone feel the need to seek protection, which a gang can provide, or even retaliation, which a gang could initiate. Also, if you have been a victim of a form of assault having the respect that comes with being a gang member could be an important comfort for victimized youths.

Individual delinquency and neighborhood gangs have been known to predict gang involvement in youth (Alleyne et al., 2011). Delinquent activity is typically a group,

phenomenon and it is not surprising that this can result in youth joining gangs and participating in gang activity alone and in a group as well (Alleyne et al., 2011). Alleyne and Wood (2011) found that individual delinquency, deviant peer pressure, and the presence of neighborhood gangs predicted gang involvement. Peer associations with those in gang and affiliated with gangs showed that those who were friends or associated with those who were in a gang had a significantly higher likelihood of violent offending. This study also found that those in a gang had a higher likelihood of offending than their friends who were not in a gang (Ang et al., 2012).

CHAPTER 3

THE MOTIVATION FOR GANG MEMBERSHIP AND POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Gang members sometimes seek joining a gang for protection, to retaliate against those who may have victimized them (White et al., 2012.; Strand 2014; Taylor, 2014). In a study by White and Mason in 2012 bullying and associating with gangs were discussed and analyzed by dissecting previous research on the two topics. Gaining protection from bullying or gaining protections from the threat of physical violence may be an important motivation for joining a gang. Those that are constantly targeted by others and the victims of being taunted on the streets may band together and commit acts of violence in order to protect themselves from future physical harm. Gangs can also be appealing because some may view them as fun, giving people a fun night out that involves drinking, partying, and doing whatever they want while having the protection of the gang. Gangs also give males a sense of masculinity. They are perceived as tough through the lens of the gang, and if they assault others this gives them a way to express their aggression (White et al., 2012). In Strand's (2014) study, the topic of why people join gangs was discussed in detail in Cape Town South Africa. Personal interviews were conducted to find out why people join and become affiliated with gangs. Key points of this study show that with poverty unemployment follows naturally. Poverty and high levels of unemployment are risk factors when it comes to gang activity. For example, if people do not have jobs, they will be more likely to want to rob someone or inclined to sell drugs for money to support themselves. Youth having idle time and not being involved with sports, clubs and extracurricular activities can lead them to hang out in the street or in parks. The streets and parks can be flooded with gang members and taken over in various spots for them to sell drugs and conduct other criminal activity. A sense of belonging can be positive reinforcement for an individual to be a part of a

gang. The interviewees in this study discussed this quite a lot as a reason why adolescents join gangs. An Interviewee stated that young women seek gangs as a sense of belonging when they do not get the emotional support from home. This sense of belonging however is not always genuine and will not be there for you when you are facing time in court. They will only use you when they need you and manipulate and/ or take advantage of you because you have this need (Strand, 2014).

In Taylor's (2013) study why American boys join gangs was discussed and analyzed with the viewpoint of poverty status and having other related disadvantages being a large influence on joining the gang. This studies data was collected by reviewing literature about gangs in addition to qualitative interviews with those who have had close relationships with gang members and some who were gang members themselves. An individual named Eddy told the researcher how he was allowed to do pretty much anything he wanted and then began to engage in delinquent activity with gang members. His parents were first generation immigrants from Mexico and worked for a very low wage to provide for their family. His father was also an alcoholic which only made his home situation worse due to the fighting that would result from that. Eddy due to the hectic family life turned to gangs as a result of his feelings of anger and anxiety. The respondents in this study showed that the acting out was a result of family life being far from normative (Taylor, 2013).

CHAPTER 4

WHY YOUTH COMMIT DELINQUENCY

Adolescents is an extremely vulnerable age group that can be triggered very easily and fall down a path of crime. Negative life events cause negative emotions like anger and sadness in adolescents. These negative emotions can generate youth to seek emotional connections to replace the ones they have lost or need. Multiple factors leading to strain directly exposes individuals to delinquency and favorable views of breaking the law (Johnson et al., 2012). The youth may seek these connections through delinquent peers or gang membership. Delinquent peers and gang members give the youth with these negative emotions the emotional support or just an opportunity to get their mind off the negative life event they just went through and gets the youth to participate in criminal acts with them which led them down a criminal path. The following will be an overview of both GST and SLT, followed by a review of prior studies that have tested their applicability to delinquency.

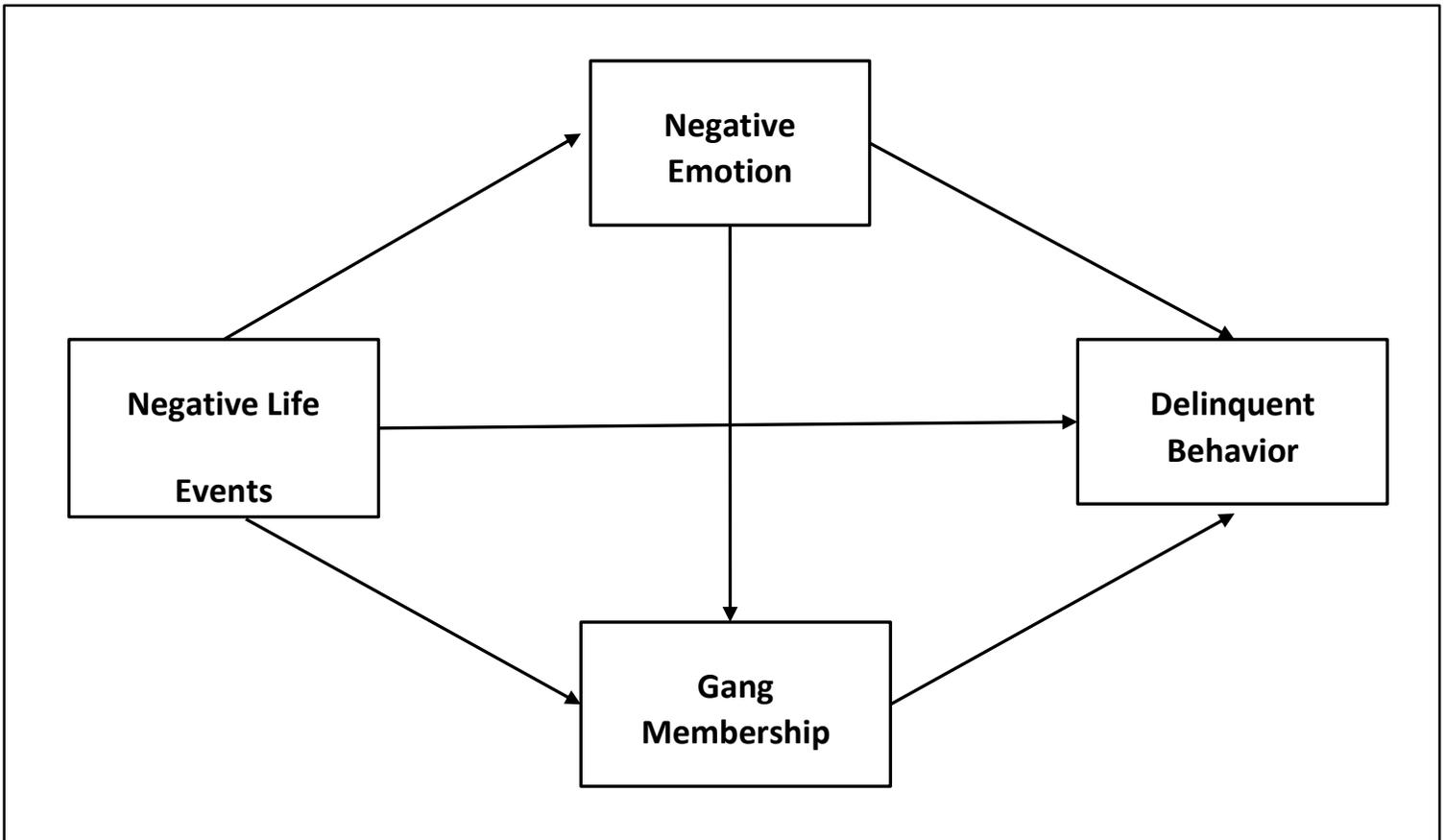


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Integrated Approach for GST and SLT

General Strain Theory and Delinquency

Agnew states (Agnew, 1992) that negative events lead to individuals having negative emotions which causes crime and delinquency. These people after having these negative emotions respond in different ways using different coping mechanisms. These coping mechanisms depend on what is readily available to the individual and will sooth their specific need at that time. The coping mechanisms used to cope with strain can vary by the nature of the offense, intensity, and duration of the strain (Broidy, 2001). Different individuals adjust to strain in different ways for some it makes them commit crimes and for those that conform more to societies ideals it makes them do something like get a second job or adjust to not having money

if that was the cause of the strain. Negative life events trigger negative emotions that are handled by coping mechanisms. Some of these negative emotions include anger, depression and/or sadness. We all feel these emotions from time to time, but the intensity of these emotions can lead to individuals who do not have coping strategies available to them to engage in illegal coping mechanisms like criminal activity. They do not have coping strategies that are legitimate and would help them deal with their emotions in an appropriate way. These individuals are surrounded by criminal activities to do to distract them from the stress or negative emotions they are feeling. All of this pressure puts them in a position to conduct criminal activity more often than other who are not surrounded by criminal opportunities. Those that are in a situation where criminal coping mechanisms are available to them and legitimate opportunities are not more likely to commit crimes because they are in that position. The choices are there's it is just that those in that position are not accepting of the means for success and counseling and other ways to deal with negative stimuli like removing yourself from them by keeping yourself busy with other tasks that do not involve them to deal with those emotions a child might make the decision to hurt someone else in an attempt to soothe his or her pain. Individuals who experience negative life events are more likely to feel negative emotions than others. This leads to an increase in their chances of committing offending behavior than others who may not go through negative life events as frequently.

There are three major types of strain, failure to achieve positively valued goals, removal of positively valued stimuli and the presentation of negatively valued stimuli (Agnew, 1992). The failure to achieve positively valued goals in youth can be numerous especially in lower class individuals. Criticisms of this theory have said that it neglected the adolescent middle-class criminal (Agnew, 1992). Although this could prove to be false because everyone can have

different goals and some may be more attainable to some than to others and of course a higher social class can be helpful to reach desired goals, however middle-class individuals have goals they want to reach as well and cannot reach them for similar circumstances. For example, not being able to afford everything they ask their parents for like new clothes to look cooler to other adolescents. Goals can be universal throughout social class and do not necessarily have to be immediate, these goals can include intelligence physical attractiveness, and athletic ability (Agnew, 1992). These factors are things that an adolescent cannot always change while they are in high school or middle school and they become undesirable to his or herself and to others. Goals of athletic ability, intelligence and physical attractiveness can come to the adolescent later with age but could potentially be in reach for them now if they study hard and engage in sports for example. These goals are enforced by the subcultural system of the Strain is measured by the distinction of aspirational a youth may have and expectations of achieving that goal (Agnew, 1992). The adolescent not achieving his or her goals can cause strain which can lead them to have negative emotions and commit crimes and/or join a gang.

The removal of a positively valued person or anticipated removal of a positively valued stimuli from your life is a predominant and stressful life event, the individual could try to replace the stimuli, prevent the loss of the stimuli, try to retrieve the loss stimuli, or obtain a substitute stimulus, seek revenge for the loss of stimuli or manage the negative effect by use of a controlled substance or other criminal activities (Agnew, 1992). Stressful events occur like this all the time and that this is far too common. General strain Theory is one of the best theories to explain gang association and affiliation. General Strain theory couples with many crimes and explains why they happen; a person does this or something dramatic happens in a person life and causes them to do something criminal. The presence of negatively valued stimuli can lead to aggression and

other negative emotions resulting in criminal outcomes even when a legal option is available (Agnew, 1992). Thus, beginning a negative definition of what strength is and committing more crimes to cope with the negative emotions they have dealt during adolescence. Gang members often commit crimes for their reputation and to present themselves as strong individuals. Being bullied for a long time period can cause a person to overcompensate by joining a gang to fill the void and prove the bullies wrong and protect their ego and achieve positively valued goals. Delinquency can come from many scenarios when someone tries to get away from negative stimuli and begins to associate with a gang for example, in an effort to terminate the negative stimuli, to seek revenge (Agnew, 1992).

Negative Life Events, Negative Emotions, and Delinquency

Many studies have made important contributions to better understanding of GST and its empirical validity testing that various forms of negative life events/trauma (e.g., history of victimization experience, peer conflict, peer rejection, financial strain, etc.) can lead a juvenile to commit acts of deviance. Youth who experience some sort of strain are at a high risk of juvenile delinquency. These forms of strain can occur at any developmental stage adolescence or childhood (Maschi et al., 2008). Trauma, also, can occur early in the individual's childhood or in the adolescence and can lead them to committing delinquent acts.

Victimization has begun to be looked at as a cause rather than an outcome of delinquency in research (Hay et al., 2006). Victimization can cause trauma which is strain. Victimization in general is also associated with committing deviant acts. Being victimized being a bully and being a bully victim were all positively correlated with this form of deviance (Decamp et al., 2014). Those that were victims of bullying showed higher deviance prevalence of committing street crime, deviance, and substance abuse than those who were not victims of bullying (Bradshaw et

al., 2013; Walters, 2016). The NCVS (2004) reports that five million violent victimizations occur each year, two million of these victimizations involve young victims who are more susceptible to manipulation of thought and the changing of deviant definitions. Longitudinally victimization has had a positive correlation with substance abuse violent property crime and general delinquency (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Walters, 2016; Hay et al., 2006).

In a study by Park and Metcalfe (2020), the researchers examined changes in bullying victimization and delinquency among Korean students from a developmental strain perspective. The results showed a positive relationship between bullying and delinquency. The relationship grew stronger when higher risk factors were in play. Risk factors like delinquent peers, personality traits, and poor social supports. Bullying also lead to more criminal activity over the years such as substance abuse, violence, and theft (Park et al., 2020).

Bullying can also lead to devastating outcomes such as suicide. In a 2019 study Cho used a latent class analysis to examine the effects of predictors like strainful social dynamics and typologies of suicidal behavior. Results showed that prior bullying victimization was a significant risk factor in predicting higher odds of serious suicide ideations (Cho, 2019). Cho and Glassner (2019) also conducted a study that showed how bullying victimization child abuse and peer conflict have a direct effect on suicidal ideation. Negative emotions played a large role in their study erasing the direct significance between bullying victimization, child abuse, and peer conflict, and suicidal ideation.

The relationship between child abuse and delinquency has particularly garnered a sizable interest from empirical researchers. Bunch et al. (2018) found child abuse had a relationship with delinquency. In this study path modeling was employed to examine the relationship between child abuse self-control and delinquency. Data was gathered from The National Longitudinal

Study of Adolescent to Adult Health which is a longitudinal study of nationally representative school-based sample of youth who were in grades 7 to 12 from 1994 to 1995. The results showed that GST mediated the relationship between child abuse and delinquency (Bunch et al 2018).

Early physical child abuse was discussed in a study by Lansford and others (2007). The families that this data was collected from were a part of a longitudinal study called the Child development project, this data came from three cities in the Midwest. The results of this study showed that those who had been abused in the first five years of their life were at a greater risk for being arrested for violent offenses as well as nonviolent offenses and status offenses such as underage drinking. This study also found that youth who were abused were less likely to graduate from high school. This makes reaching high value goals more difficult for the adolescent and may trigger them to commit delinquent acts. Yun and colleagues (2011) studied the possible correlations between child maltreatment and violent delinquency. This study used data from Add health as their sample. This study found that sexual abuse and neglect predict violent delinquency. This study did not find a connection however between physical abuse and future delinquency. This is most likely due to the other forms of child abuse that were used in the study that showed more prevalence than physical abuse (Yun et al., 2011). Another study in china examined the relationship between maltreatment and delinquency. Gao and other colleague's (2016) GST were used to back up their arguments, examining the mediating effects of delinquent peer associations, anger, depression, and others. They gathered data from a middle school in Shenzhen China in 2013. They found that maltreatment had a significant relationship with delinquency. The mediating effects were a state of anger, depression, social control and delinquent peer affiliation. Depression as a response to maltreatment had an indirect effect on delinquency and weakened to significance of social control. Maltreatment was shown to increase

anger which in turn puts them at a higher risk of affiliations with delinquent peers causing them to engage in delinquency (Gao et al., 2016).

Some studies have found that social isolation/peer conflicts mark a turning point on adolescent development. Kreager in 2004 used Add health data to assess the relationship between isolation and delinquency. The student's behaviors and school friendships were examined. The results showed that isolation of an individual paired with conflicts with problematic peers at school increased the likelihood of future delinquency (Kreager, 2004). Another study by Agnew and Brezina (1997) examined relational problems in association with peers' gender and delinquency. They found that females who are more popular with the opposite sex may face pressure from their male peers to engage in deviant activities. When it comes to delinquency among males those who stated that they make friendships easily with other boys showed slightly higher results for delinquency. Additionally, for male's poor-quality relationships were also associated with higher levels of delinquency. In conclusion, this study found that the lack of close ties with peers does not increase delinquency and that in fact opposite has the effect of increased delinquency. This is due in part to the fact that the relationships that are present are poor relations with delinquent peers, however this result was more prevalent in males more than females. Financial strain was also known to lead to delinquency. In Eitle and colleagues 2004 study negative life events were used to examine the predictors of gang membership. The study used data from a cohort of South Florida boys. Family financial stress was shown to be a predictor of gang membership which in turn leads to later delinquency (Eitle, 2004). Families can affect a child due to vicarious stress they feel from their parent having financial issues. This could lead to the adolescent feeling they need to help provide for their family and my result in them seeking unconventional means such as crime to obtain

what is needed for the financial stability of his or her family.

Negative emotions are the mediating factor between strain and delinquency. In other words, exposure to greater levels of stress and strain (e.g., family and peer conflict) are predictive of higher levels of negative emotions such as anger and anxiety (Agnew, 1992; Aseltine et al., 2000; Hay et al., 2008). Anger and anxiety can cause a person to commit criminal and deviant acts due to the impaired sense of reasoning the emotions cause. Anger is the most common negative emotion that led to delinquency (Hay et al., 2006). Anger affects an individual in ways that are conducive to delinquency (Jang et al., 2012). The need for revenge is heightened when the emotion of anger enters the picture. Youth could be being bullied at school and their home life could also be contributing to their negative emotions.

The existing literature has found a positive relationship between strain and negative emotions (Akins et al., 2010; Broidy, 2001; Jang et al., 2003; Mazerolle et al., 1998). A multitude of strains/stressors (e.g., financial strain, victimization experiences, frustrations with one's work, the failure of school achievement, the death or illness of a friend, and the divorce of one's parents) are expressed as external sources of strains (Jang et al., 2003). Negative emotions reflect a state of negative emotional discord due to internal or external conditions. For example, individuals who suffered from depression tied to any number of negative stressors that lead to strain, such as the relationship with friends, family, and intimate other groups (Akins et al., 2010; Broidy, 2001; Jang et al., 2003; Mazerolle et al., 1998; Ostrowsky et al., 2005).

Negative emotions like anger resentment, and anxiety can lead to delinquency as a coping mechanism (Hay et al., 2008). Various forms of deviance can be a result of negative emotions. Acts of delinquency such as property crime vandalizing an abandoned building, and spraying graffiti on a building. Other crimes that are a result of strain are violent crimes due to anger. Hay

and Evans (2006) highlight that the emotion that is the greatest indicator for delinquency is anger. Anger as the result of repeated strain causes desire for retaliation and the relinquishing of their inhibitions that prevented them from committing delinquent acts up unto this point (Hay et al., 2006). Inner directed emotions as well as outer directed emotions were found by Jang and Rhodes (2012) to influence deviant behaviors. The outer directed emotions where situational anger, depression, and anxiety additionally inner-directed emotions are *situational* depression and anxiety in this study, which are recognized as negative emotions. There are many studies that back up the association of outer directed emotions and inner-directed emotions and anger (Broidy 2001; Jang et al., 2012). Negative emotions can cause people especially adolescents to act irrationally and do things they would not have done if they had more positive emotions. Coping mechanisms like drugs and crime come into play in order to relive the feeling of those emotions. Violent criminal activity such as a homicide can come from the want for revenge due to the anger they have experienced (crime of passion, e.g., Homicide, Assault). Negative emotions need a healthy way to cope in order for these crimes not to take place. Additionally, adolescents could have a tougher time dealing with negative emotions because they are more vulnerable due to fluctuations in their hormones and their lack of ability to reason (Agnew, 1997).

Drug use as a coping mechanism just adds fuel to the fire and makes them more likely to commit delinquent acts and begin to associate themselves with those that are even more involved in more serious acts of delinquency (acts of violence and property crime). Drug use is also an act of delinquency especially for adolescents, when tobacco use is also not permissible along with other drugs that are not illegal for adults. Strain, crime, and drug use are all correlated together to explain crime and delinquency (Jang et al., 2012). In a study on ecstasy use SLT was backed

up due to respondents who reported more drug use was going on in their school showed an increased risk for drug use themselves. Students that had more conservative views about drug use, and those that also reported that their parents and peers have negative viewpoints about drug use were at less risk for ecstasy use (Norman et al., 2015). Ecstasy is more popularly known as molly this drug causes an increase in energy, empathy towards others and emotional warmth as well as distortions in sensory and time perceptions. A person who is undergoing a lot of anxiety stress anger or depression may look at the side effects of this drug and consider it to be a great option for them to get away from all life's stressors that have burdened them. The distortions in sensory and time perception would make them feel less stressed, for example if they had certain goals in their life, they planned to reach by a certain time this drug could help them forget about that and focus on being emotionally warm and caring for others. This drug can lead to the use of heroin and cocaine as well as making the users nine times more likely to commit suicide (Norman et al., 2015). Adolescent drug use can have very damaging consequences and can also lead them towards committing delinquent activity. GST is effective in explaining the correlation of drug use and delinquency as well as drug use leading to the other damaging consequences such as suicide.

Although everyone is capable of committing crime or acts of deviance if the circumstances are favorable (Hay et al., 2006). In the right circumstances and with the proper strain applied people are capable of many acts they may have thought they could never commit. Negative emotions can vary across genders. Peer rejection affects males more than females. Males are more prevalent to be in gangs and commit more crimes in general in relation to women. This also shows that males tend to have more negative emotions than females and more likely to engage in crime in accordance with the GST (Hay et al., 2006).

Social learning Theory and Delinquency

Akers (1973) states that delinquent behavior is learned from others. Learning delinquent behavior occurs when a group controls or compromises the individual's major source of reinforcements (Akers, 1973). The main premise of this theory goes back to the saying of you are who you hang out with. Your friends and associates have a large impact on your everyday life and the activities you choose to participate in. The amount of time you spend with those groups and the frequency of their reinforcement for you to engage in delinquent activities is also a factor for SLT (Akers, 1973).

The core constructs of SLT are differential association, definitions, imitation, and differential reinforcement. Akers gives a simple definition of differential reinforcement saying that two acts that both produce and are then reinforced by the same consequences and the one that produces that response more frequently having a higher probability of occurring will be the action that is done again (Akers, 1973). Differential association refers to the idea that if a person is repeatedly surrounded by those who commit delinquent acts and witnesses the delinquent acts themselves, they will begin to participate in those delinquent acts and become a delinquent themselves. Definitions will change beliefs on what is right and wrong in an individual. Instead of understanding that bullying someone for instance is wrong they will believe it is justified for some reason for a person to be treated this way beginning their delinquent behavior. Another example is a youth may have been raised by his parents to believe that using drugs is bad but could imitate its delinquent peers in order to make himself look "cool" and achieve a higher social status. Imitation is the mimicking of another's behavior. The idea of reinforcement is a large push for adolescents who are in a gang to continue to imitate others and engage in their delinquent behavior. Positive reinforcement has the premise of receiving pleasant pleasing and

desirable events followed by actions (Akers, 1973). The positive reinforcement they receive for being a gang member like being feared by others which they might view as respect or being able to have access to money through illegal activities such as selling drugs, looting and robbing. In social settings where delinquent youth and non- delinquent youth come together like schools' parks and shopping malls these deviant events can take place where non-delinquent youth can become exposed to a local gang and learn new definitions from them and learn how to commit deviant and delinquent acts from them.

Direct Effect of Gang Membership on Delinquency

Those who are gang members have a higher likelihood of committing deviant acts. The atmosphere of the gang is violent and other gang members are committing deviant acts of their own, such as drugs, violent and property crime. Some gang members may agree to committing some forms of deviance but not all form or deviance for example like violent crimes. A person may be in agreeance that drugs are permissible but then being around other gang members who have different definitions of what is permissible and what is not could lead them to commit other criminal activities with them. Social Learning theory states that you learn behaviors and changes of deviant definitions from your peers. From being a gang member your peers' ideas and opinions are shaped by their own thoughts and opinions.

If an individual is outwardly exhibiting violent behavior, they may be doing so in a way that could harm others and lead to criminal activity. The SLT aspect comes into play when Matsuada and colleagues (2013) found that the association with delinquent peers leads to delinquent activity. This is a very logical conclusion that can be easily connected to gang membership. According to Anderson's code of the street and the results of a 2013 study gang membership can lead to attitudinal shifts that facilitate involvement in violent behavior. This

occurs due to socialization with delinquent peers without supervision and with drug and alcohol (Matsuda et al., 2013). Gang members feel as though they must portray and maintain this toughness and masculinity. Those who joined a gang believed that in order to achieve and maintain respect they need to use physical aggression. This overuse of physical aggression can lead to violent crimes such as assault (Matsuda et al., 2013).

Individual social and environmental factors can influence a youth's life. In a study that recruited youth from five London public schools to analyze the relationship between multiple factors and their involvement in delinquency. A survey was done in a classroom setting and asked youth questions about their everyday life, gang involvement, and involvement in delinquency. The students were asked questions about gang involvement age gender and background information. Gang involvement was identified as responding yes to a series of questions about who they hang out with and if they do things together or just hang out. They then went deeper into the questionnaire assessing the age of who they hang out with and durability of the group, for instance if the group has lasted for a period longer than three months. One defining factor of a gang was if they hang out as a group in public spaces where gang usually locate like standing in street for long periods of time and being in the park but conducting unusual activity like appearing to be distributing drugs and not engaging with the parks activities or seeming to do anything related to needing to be in the park for some criminal purpose. Group criminality was also assessed by asking if doing illegal things was accepted in the group. Lastly, they asked do you do illegal things together. These questions are very thorough in leading up to an adolescent complying to being in a gang without outwardly admitting it. The study consisted of 566 boys and 231 girls a total of 1041 questionnaires were returned and 798 were used for final analyses. The participants were between 12 and 18 years of age. This age group was determined

to be the most at risk for gang membership. Neighborhood gangs had a direct relationship with youth involvement in delinquency. Additionally, individual involvement along with neighborhoods gangs were significant predictors of gang involvement (Alleyne & Wood, 2011). This is highlighting how those that are in gangs also participate in delinquency themselves this can influence an adolescent that does not have the idea to commit deviant acts to do so once they have become associated with the gang. Gang membership is a predictor of delinquent activity.

A study by Ang and colleagues (2011), it was found that violent offending is 4.28 times more likely in youths who belong to a gang. Additionally, they found that youth who do not belong in the gang but have friends who belong in the gang are 3.89 time more likely to violently offend. Even those who were not a part of the gang and had a friend or had some sort of differential association with the gang were more likely to engage in delinquency. This is due to their associations with the gang influencing their behaviors and changing their definitions. They could also want to be a part of the gang for the criminal opportunities that come with it and could see joining the gang as a means to gain revenge. To get an even greater look at the effects of joining a gang on youth delinquency, in reference to those who are not in a gang and do not have friends who are in a gang the odds increase to 328% higher for youth who belong to a gang and 289% higher for youths who are not in a gang but have friends that are in a gang (Ang et al., 2011).

In a Kissner and Pyrooz (2009) study the influence of parents and peers to assess this link to gangs was analyzed. This study also found prevalence for those who have gang friends. Those who have a gang friend have reported being in a gang. Those who have had gang involved relatives were more than four and a half times more likely to report former gang membership. However, there was a more positive significance with those who reported having parents who

were in a gang and were former gang members themselves. They also found a finding that would suggest the number of gang friends you have may have led to gang membership. Measures of differential association showed that those who had older siblings that joined the gang showed a significance for having a higher likelihood of being a gang member (Kissner et al., 2009).

In a study by Alleyne and Wood (2011) gang involvement compared to social and environmental factors was analyzed. Again, although this study did not align with my theoretical concept it had interesting results about how neighborhood gangs can influence gang involvement; thus, this study backing up SLT. Winfree and colleagues (1994) found that gang membership and group context were analyzed in relation to group offending. Surveys were given to two independent public schools in New Mexico. A stratified random sample of male and female from 9th grade public school students. A self-report delinquency survey was given to the students. The students had a choice from 15 different offenses theft property, drug related general, personal, group, and context crimes. SLT was measured by having peers that were gang members and were coded in a range from one to four. Four being the highest. They assessed differential reinforcements by being asked to define the good and bad of being associated with gang membership. Differential definitions were analyzed by having friends in gang being in a gang and answering yes to *do you do whatever the gang leaders tell you to*. This study found the SLT perspective provided considerable insights into gang membership. Gang members exhibit differential associations more than uninvolved youths. This shows that having knowledge about who someone hangs out with has a stronger relation to gang membership than other predictors such as race, sex, and residence pattern. They also found that having pro gang attitudes is the best method of discriminating between gang and non-gang youth. Youth possessing pro-gang attitudes are very likely to be youth gang members. Compared with the differential associations

alone model the influence of the reinforcer/punisher sector of SLT is no longer significant in this study. This study found that the lower “significant other adult approval of gangs” and “gang behavior” the greater the offending. Being rewarded or punished for committing a delinquent act had no significance on gang membership. When it comes to delinquent activity theft crimes were tied to pro gang attitudes. Pro-gang attitudes were also linked to higher levels of drug related crime. Another variable was group context offending. This variable seems similar to gang offending but had two main characteristics. First these offenses are violent crimes ranging from assault to attempted murder. Secondly the offenses are either committed in a group setting or at the command of someone else. The researchers gave a great example to explain this. The researchers gave a great example to explain this. If you have two fight scenarios both fights consisting of more than one person. In one fight weapons are used in the other no weapons are used. In the fight with the weapon the person fired the weapon and shot at someone due to orders that were given to him in the form of a command or an order. Group context personal crimes showed strong significance to gang attitudes and both differential associations and gang membership (Winfrey et al., 1994). This study connected the features of SLT to gang membership and violence in a detailed way that made it clear to see the key parts of the theory that work with describing gang membership and offending.

In a study by Vowell and May (2000) gang membership was found to be correlated with delinquency. In this study the researchers asked respondents questions to measure if they were in a gang or not and asked the adolescent the blatant question “Are you a member of a youth gang?” they did not ask organizational questions due to conflicting research about the validity. Gang membership in this study was shown to lead to violence, in this study gang membership was the largest predictor of violence for African Americans and Europeans (Vowell et al., 2000).

Another study by Melde conducted across seven cities using five waves of data 3700 youth from 31 schools were analyzed. The results of this study reported that gang membership was shown to increase the odds of involvement in violent incidents. Depending on the group they were analyzing the increases ranged from 10 to 21 percent. After leaving the gang their propensity towards violence was no longer significant (Melde, 2012). Becoming a gang member can also spark an interest in drugs. Correlates were also found for other forms of deviance such as substance abuse like marijuana, cigarettes, prescriptions drug use, and alcohol (Bradshaw et al., 2013; Walters, 2016). These studies show the direct effect gang membership can have on delinquency. Gang membership increases an adolescent's likelihood to commit violent crimes, substance abuse and overall delinquency. Having an idea of who is in a gang and who is not is a huge predictor of delinquency.

CHAPTER 5

MEDIATING ROLE OF GANG MEMBERSHIP

Why GST and SLT is Integrated to Explain Delinquency?

Agnew (1992) highlighted that strained individuals are more likely to engage in criminal and delinquent behaviors when their ability to cope with strain is influenced by individual temperamental and opportunity factors. In other words, individuals who experience negative life events are at high risk of delinquent behavior in certain criminogenic, situational circumstances that create and facilitate opportunities. Negative emotions are a natural response for most individuals and not in all cases does this lead directly to crime or delinquency. Empirical evidence has provided that certain criminogenic, situational circumstances play a mediating role in predicting the relationship between negative life events and delinquency. Individuals learn to have self-control over their emotions and realize that retaliation or revenge is not always the answer (Kim et al., 2009).

Studies have shown that bullying victimization causes cognitive impulsivity which leads to delinquent activity (Maschi et al., 2008). Failure to achieve positively valued goals can have an influence on youth engaging in delinquency. Youth tend to be more impulsive and have a disregard for their future while thinking and behaving in present day (Mahler et al., 2017). By having these negative emotions, impulsivity can begin, and they can make bad decisions like choosing to commit a crime which will influence their life in the long run and may prohibit them from reaching their goals. Peer rejection also leads to low self-control which can trigger negative emotions in an adolescent leading them to commit deviant acts (Agnew et al., 1997). A study by Kim Cho Peguero and Misuraca (2019) examined the pathway from bullying victimization to delinquency. Mediating roles included substance abuse aggression and academic performance.

They conducted a multi wave study using data from a Korean Welfare Study. The results found that higher levels of aggression were associated with delinquency. The indirect path of bullying victimization aggression and delinquency was found (Kim et al., 2019). Kim and other colleagues (2009) strived to examine whether an adolescent running away from home mediated the link between child maltreatment (Child abuse or victimization) and later delinquency and victimization. A longitudinal study was conducted with 416 adolescents from two counties. Findings have shown that physical and psychological abuse can lead to a child running away from home. In turn running away can predict delinquency and victimization for the adolescent (Kim et al 2009).

The integrated approach of competing theories (e.g., general strain, social learning, and social control) in delinquency has been proposed to improve the explanatory power of those theories (Elliott et al., 1985). However, very few studies applied the integrated approach of GST and SLT to explain how strain causes gang delinquency, emphasizing the mediating role of gang membership (e.g., internalization of unconventional norms/ values and attraction to gang groups for acceptance, support, reinforcement, and rewards) in the strain-delinquency prediction. Agnew (2006) suggested that strains promote criminogenic beliefs, which undermine conventional beliefs, thus freeing individuals to spend more time with gang members, which in turn, increases criminal and delinquent behavior in a gang group. Agnew pointed out mutual reinforcement between conventional beliefs and delinquent peers.

Tests of the integrated approach between GST and SLT have found bonding to delinquent groups, mediating the relationship between strains and delinquency (e.g., Ingram et al., 2007; Paternoster et al., 1994). To cope with negative emotion, delinquency occurs when more socially acceptable and resources are unavailable or unwanted by the individual (Johnson

et al., 2012). When an adolescent is vulnerable or experiencing the feelings of negative emotions they often turn to delinquent peers. Especially when non-delinquent peers have rejected them. Affiliation with delinquent peers predicted an increase in involvement with the criminal justice system for individuals who start engaging in delinquent behaviors at a younger age and for those that are late starters (Ang et al., 2012). It is a well-known fact that gang members commit significantly more delinquent acts than non-gang members, additionally the delinquent acts committed by the gang members are disproportionate to their representation (Ang et al., 2012). Gang members rate of delinquency lessen once they leave and disassociate with the gang (Thornberry, 1993). Though these studies it is clear that gang association or affiliation is correlated with delinquency.

Many factors can cause negative emotions in a peer's life. Youth associate with delinquent peers when they are rejected by others who are prosocial. Peer rejection is a quality that is associated with crime but varies among the two genders (Higgins et al., 2011). Peer rejection can be a source of strain and ensue other forms of strain to occur. Not having many friends can cause people to judge you based off of other opinions causing a delinquent to be more antisocial and keep to themselves. This further shows how easily SLT, and GST can be correlated together. Individuals who associate with delinquent peers are more likely to promote criminogenic beliefs, which encourage such behaviors (Hayes, 1997). Bao, Haas, Chen, and Pi (2014) tested the integrated approach and found that students experiencing repeated strains in school were more likely to develop positive interpretations of delinquent acts both through weakened conventional beliefs and association with delinquent peers. Deviant peer pressure was shown to have an indirect effect on gang involvement (Alleyne et al., 2011; Maschi et al., 2008). Involvement in gangs can result from a learning environment that fosters gang joining and

behavior. Neighborhood gangs tamper with parenting practices that may prevent an adolescent from associating with antisocial peers.

Bao, Haas, and Xie (2016) also concluded the strains from negative treatment done by parents resulted in the weakening of conventional beliefs and association with delinquent peers, which in turn, led to delinquency. Strains from negative treatment by parents are also thought to contribute to delinquency in youth. Bad parenting can cause negative emotions which can lead to youth finding comfort and the emotional support they are lacking in delinquent peers which will cause them to commit delinquent acts. In an intergenerational study about children with delinquent parents, the results showed those with delinquent parents had an increased risk for delinquency (Johnson et al., 2012). However, having parents that are too strict can cause add stress in a youth's life that can push them to find parental figures or just simply friends that fill that emotional connection that is needed. Delinquency is more likely to occur with those who are subject to harsh treatment by their parents and teachers (Agnew, 2012). Having parents that are not establishing rules and structure can also cause the youth to have too much idle time on their hands. Parenting that is not overly harsh and that aligns, presenting reasonable punishment for a youth exhibiting criminal behavior is known to reduce crime (Agnew, 2012). This could be prohibiting them from hanging out with a friend that the parent knows is delinquent and instilling more family time to have the youth engage more in his or her family. Of course, this is if the family is prosocial and would not cause the youth to go further towards the gang members.

Mediating Effects of Gang Membership on the Link between Negative Life Events and Delinquency

Little is known about the mediating role of gang membership on the relationship between strains and delinquency within the theoretical framework of integrated approach of SLT and

GST, but some studies have been centered on the relationships between strains, gang membership, and delinquency. Gangs are known to gather members for protection and these stressful life events like losing a parent or being bullied can cause a person to feel the need for protection.

Eitle and colleagues' (2004) study, GST theory was measured out right by predicting joining a gang due to early exposure to stressful life events while controlling for other variables. They examined if youth who undergo a stressful life event are more likely to join a gang. Self-nominations were used to assess if individuals were in a gang. Other factors assessed were preteen stress exposure, family factors, family distribution and family drug use. They also included self-derogation, early deviance, and early peer deviance. The results found that those with lower levels of parental SES, family distribution, and parents' divorce enhanced the chances of being involved with a gang. Family financial stress was also shown to be a significant association with gang membership. Having parents that are not financially stable can result in an adolescent not being able to afford items they need for school and block them from obtaining goals like educational success. Significant correlations were found in this study as well between stress exposure and gang membership. Stress and strain were found as a prominent risk factors for gang affiliation (Eitle et al., 2004). This further correlates GST to delinquency. The features of GST need to be recognized in correlation with gang affiliation and delinquency. Stress can come from family and school which both can be a contributor to an adolescent's stress.

In a study by Vowell and May (2000), gang membership was used as a mediating factor to predict adolescent violent behavior. They examined if youth from families that receive some sort of public assistance are more likely to have perceptions of blocked opportunity than other youth. Perceived blocked opportunity has a positive effect on gang membership because it is

discouraging. The idea that you cannot achieve your positively valued goals will make an adolescent not want to try to obtain their life goals like wealth and success by legal means. Also, a lack of opportunity also means a lack of education which can make competing with the upper and middle class next to impossible for things such as applying to universities and obtaining jobs. In turn, gang membership will lead to an increase of the level of self-reported violent behavior. Structural strain is the relationship between the inability of adolescents to achieve financial success or middle-class status through legitimate channels and their subsequent involvement in delinquency (Vowell et al., 2000) References to Cohen's (1955) study were made to better explain the correlations of perceived blocked opportunity, gang membership, and violence (Cohen, 1955). They gathered 8,338 respondents across a rural southern state. The path in this study goes that poverty status leads to perceived blocked opportunity which leads to gang membership which results of course in violence. The results from this study supported structural strain theory. Feeling that you need to work hard to achieve success because of what you look like was a significant constraint. Perceived blocked opportunity predicted gang membership and gang membership showed a direct effect on violence as well as blocked opportunity (Vowell et al., 2000).

Varano, Huebner, and Bynum (2011) assessed if risk factors traditionally associated with gang membership among adolescents would predict involvement among older incarcerated offenders. This tackles the definitions and beliefs of the offender aligning with SLT. The results showed that the individuals who were in organized gangs sustained the highest average number of serious misconduct reports. Prior criminal involvement, association with delinquent friends, and delinquent attitudes were correlated positively with organized gang involvement. Education, gun carrying, and concentrated disadvantage were also correlated to misconduct reports. Gang

affiliation is correlated with SLT by the rate of delinquency increasing while individuals are associated with gangs or active gang members. Youth who showed early signs of violent externalizing behavior and associated with antisocial peers were more than twice as likely to be and remain in a gang for more than one year. This study has clearly shown the links between associations with antisocial peers and delinquency. This study has also brought up an interesting point about violent behavior, which can be a result of negative emotions that have become externalized due to strain. In this study the strain as well as the association were both linked to delinquent behavior showing how the two theories of GST and SLT come together to better explain juvenile delinquency (Hill et al., 2001).

Childhood trauma was correlated with gang membership by Cepeda and colleagues (2014). This study used a childhood trauma questionnaire to assess whether childhood trauma such as abuse, and neglect were linked to gang membership and delinquency. The results for this study showed that childhood neglect can lead to gang membership. Physical neglect was the most frequently reported for both groups assessed in the study non-gang delinquent youth and gang-involved youth. This occurred when the parent or child's caregiver does not give the child the basic needs they need to survive and succeed. Emotional neglect was also shown to have a moderate to low effect in Mexican American gang members. However, like the Yun et al (2011) study, they did not find correlates among childhood trauma like emotional physical and sexual abuse (Cepeda et al., 2014).

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has discussed that the integration of GST and SLT helps for a better understanding of why/how individuals engage in delinquent behavior, assuming that strains cause delinquency throughout negative emotions and gang membership. In other words, those that undergo negative life events such as bullying or violent victimization experience negative emotions and begin to sympathize with gang members as they are going through their individual types of strain. Negative emotions including anger, depression, antisocial attitudes, and sadness, can cause an adolescent to act out more and create a sense of impulsivity inside of them that they have never experienced, leading them to commit violent crimes. Antisocial attitudes can begin due to a negative life event like victimization as well. The individual may lose trust in their prosocial peers and begin to isolate themselves and become less involved in after school activities. The emotion of sadness similar to depression can leave someone hopeless to where they do not feel motivated to do things for themselves, or to make progress like working on an assignment or reaching a goal they have always wanted to obtain. During this time, an individual due to their negative emotions may begin to be rejected by prosocial peers. Their prosocial peers could not understand that the negative life event had such an effect on the peer and could lead them to have a negative response back to the individuals causing them to become isolated from them. This can result in them adjoining with antisocial attitudes and becoming associated with peers who are also antisocial. The antisocial becoming joining with others like them will only further the negative emotion they are already drowning in and will cause them to have less consideration for keeping peace and order in society.

Antisocial peers are known to be more deviant and can lead an individual to joining a

gang and commit more acts of deviance. Doing activities in a group makes the youth feel more comfortable in a sense and makes them feel like what they are doing cannot be so bad if this is what everyone else is doing. Changing the previously non-delinquent or gang affiliated individual's definition to align with their deviant ones. Gang membership has been shown to be a mediating factor in negative life events and violence in several studies that this study has focused on (Hay et al., 2008; Jan et al., 2012; Aseltine et al., 2000). Gang membership leads an individual to be exposed to new deviant activities they may have never experienced but may be reinforced by members of a gang. The adolescent could have never been violent before but through joining the gang and having deviant peer interactions the mindset of the adolescent has changed and he has become more deviant.

Negative life events such as child abuse and neglect were shown to be prevalent in predicting gang membership. Bullying was also found to be a correlate as well as negative relationships with problematic peers (Kreager, 2004). Bullying can include a form of emotional abuse and physical assault by an individual's peers. This can have a negative long-lasting effect on an individual and cause them to reject the means to obtain their goals. If the individuals are being bullied at school this could cause them to not want to attend school any longer and begin to perform poorly academically. Bullies and victims of bullying are more predisposed to delinquency (Decamp et al., 2014).

Now that this cycle has been realized what can we do to stop it? It is proposed that other researchers should realize this problem and how much of an impact negative life events and gang membership can have on a person's life. In order to stop this chain reaction there needs to be more support for youth who undergo victimization such as bullying and other traumatic events that occur in one's life that may lead a youth to experience negative emotions. School programs

that target anti-bullying should be implemented in order to attempt to relive some of the bullying victimization that occurs in schools. Schools should show the negative effects that bullying has on someone and show kids what they are really doing when they make fun of someone for the way they look or act. These school programs should not just be a one-day thing they should be over a couple of weeks in order to really get the adolescents to really understand. Also, when a bullying situation is observed by faculty or other students it should be reported and they should try to get the two students to resolve their problem and find a way of punishing the bully. Only punishing the bully will not be effective in my opinion they need to also try to resolve the issue between the two individuals or the bullying will continue but in a more covert way to avoid repercussions. Additionally, programs that make students aware of the dangers of using drugs and the possible side effects of using drugs even one time could have on them and their future should be pushed (Norman et al., 2015; Jang et al., 2011). This should also be a program that consist of multiple weeks of instruction. The effect that drugs have on your body should be discussed as well as the effect that a person using drugs has on their family and peers. Pictures and examples should be shown and if the school could get recovered drug addicts to come in and talk to students that would be even better. I believe this would better get the adolescent to understand the repercussions of using drugs. Adolescents often do first and think later and if they choose more to think about the repercussions of their actions then their futures and the futures of those around them would fare better.

Adolescents can desist from gang membership by involving themselves in prosocial activities and associating with pro-social peers and having good relationships with those peers. Obtaining a job can alter a person's perception of what is important in life and remind them of their responsibilities. They could cease to commit criminal acts out of fear of and not wanting to

lose their job. Additionally, finding a job can release some of the strain that the individuals are experiencing. They no longer are struggling for money, leading them to no longer want to commit crime for financial purposes. Other ways of desisting from gang membership include less unstructured routine activities which can result in less victimization (Sweeten et al., 2013). Changing your routine would lead to less people that you previously would hang out with knowing where you are. Finding a new crowd that is unlike your previous delinquent one that would enable your criminal activity. Another result of disengaging from gangs can be a higher level of temperance which can decrease an individual's likelihood to act on negative emotions they may feel. Changes in responsibilities in an individual's life can lead to less participation in delinquent activities. If researchers and program directors could come together combining GST and SLT in order to find a way to separate individuals from gangs starting with those who are the least embedded (Pyrooz et al., 2012) gangs could eventually become weaker and smaller in number. Gang members who are more embedded in the gang have a higher level of desistance and will not leave the gang quickly or easily. However, the more we know about why and how people become a part of a gang the easier it will be to disassemble the gang. If the community can give them the things they are missing and getting from the gang then they will no longer feel the need to seek gangs for protection, money, or feel the need to seek revenge. The community beginning a program that could provide more jobs and aid to disadvantaged and strained individuals could help people disassociate with gangs. The police could do a better job of monitoring and protecting individuals in disadvantaged and strenuous circumstances by having better relationships with community members. This will also help police do their jobs more efficiently and individuals will no longer feel the need to take the law into their own hands.

The evidence presented is intended to help future and current researchers make the

connection between strains, negative emotions, gang membership, and delinquency. The occurrence of multiple negative life events that lead to negative emotions and associations with gang members causing delinquent activity. Negative life events taking place in concurrence with being surrounded by delinquent peers and/or gang members leads to an increase in adolescents and youth becoming entangled in a cycle of crime and victimization. Future research would benefit from knowing the role of an individual's social process as a coping mechanism for strain and stress and learning mechanism among strained individuals, which leads to fewer instances of this cycle occurring.

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